

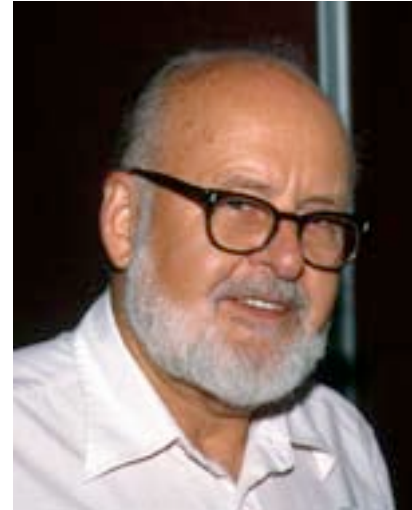


ZINGULA NAMED ENVIRONMENTAL HERO

Sanctuary Advocate Recognized

April 23, 2008--The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has selected Richard “Dick” Zingula, Ph.D., from Houston, Texas as an Environmental Hero for his support of NOAA’s Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.

NOAA’s Environmental Hero Awards were established in 1995 to commemorate Earth Day by honoring volunteers who help NOAA carry out its mission — to understand and predict changes in Earth’s environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our nation’s economic, social, and environmental needs. The award program also raises awareness about NOAA’s volunteer programs.



“Thousands of people across the country join forces with NOAA each year and the Environmental Hero award is our way of saying ‘thank you’ to several of those individuals that have made a significant impact,” said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “Dick is an outstanding volunteer - he has been sharing his time, knowledge, and experience on behalf of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary for four decades.”

Dick began giving to the Flower Garden Banks well before the site obtained sanctuary status. He was a volunteer diver on the historic expeditions that first explored the banks in the 1960's to determine if there really were living coral reefs present. Since 1968 he has logged 2,160 dives with over 150 of those within the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.

As a leader in the Houston Underwater Club, Dick led the charge to have the Flower Garden Banks designated as a National Marine Sanctuary, personally ensuring that key congressional leaders had an opportunity to see underwater photographs of the proposed sanctuary.

His volunteer contributions to sanctuary education and science continue through his support of the sanctuary's “Down Under, Out Yonder” program and other professional development workshops for educators, where he shares his knowledge and experience through lectures, slide presentations, and lab exercises on land, and through casual conversation between dives.

Dick has interpreted the geology of Stetson Bank, and has written numerous pieces for interpretation and education for the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. He has donated his records of the sanctuary (slides and notes)--one of a kind historical items that are not easily replicated. He recently completed a term as a founding member of the FGBNMS Sanctuary Advisory Council.



Dick also continues to be an active leader in the recreational dive community. In all of his dive related activities, Dick contributes to NOAA's mission by educating divers and promoting protection of fragile marine environments. He attacks marine debris, for example, by helping to organize and participating in annual river cleanups, where according to his fellow club members, "Dick has worked tirelessly for many, many years to help make Trashfest a success." He has provided support to researchers and encouraged young people to pursue careers in ocean sciences through his leadership and support of SeaSpace, and administration of the SeaSpace scholarship.

Dick also leads an annual trip to observe mass coral spawning events in the Caribbean reefs of Cayos Cochinos, a marine reserve off the coast of Honduras. Participants in his trips report having their heads filled with information about the ecology of the reef along the way. He contributes to management of those reefs by sharing his observations.

Dick has also volunteered his time to teach an annual full day course on marine invertebrates for divers and other interested individuals. Always the consummate educator and advocate, Dick routinely carries his microscope set up on dive trips to introduce participants to the part of the marine world not visible to the naked eye.

"Dick is one of those rare people who make you feel good, just by his presence. His smile and enthusiasm are contagious," said Sanctuary Manager George Schmahl. "A youthful octogenarian, Dick has given generously of his time, sharing his dive experiences with hundreds of divers and non-divers through words, pictures, and presentations."